

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



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FRESH, BAGGED SPINACH MAY BE A POSSIBLE CAUSE OF A MULTISTATE E. COLI OUTBREAK

State and County officials today warned consumers not to eat fresh, bagged spinach because it may be a possible cause of a multistate outbreak of E. coli. To date, 49 illnesses, including one death in Wisconsin, have been reported to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The California Department of Health Services (CDHS) is investigating an illness in the state that may be associated with the outbreak.

“The California Department of Health Services is extremely concerned about this outbreak,” State Public Health Officer Dr. Mark Horton said. “We are aggressively investigating possible sources of this outbreak with the federal Food and Drug Administration.”

A multistate investigation coordinated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and CDC has determined that the illnesses may be associated with fresh, bagged spinach of unknown origin. CDHS is working closely with FDA to identify possible sources of the bagged spinach associated with the illnesses.

States that have reported illnesses to CDC to date include Connecticut, Idaho, Indiana, Michigan, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Wisconsin.

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According to Dr. Frykman, San Bernardino County Public Health investigators are working with the State to identify any possible cases of E. coli linked to this outbreak. Consumers who have this type of spinach are advised to throw it away. Washing the product does not remove the contamination.

E. coli infection often causes abdominal cramps and bloody diarrhea. A small percentage of infected individuals also develop hemolytic uremic syndrome, a condition in which red blood cells are destroyed and kidney failure may occur. There is usually little or no fever, and the illness typically resolves itself in five to 10 days. Those most at risk for serious complications of this food-borne illness include young children, the elderly and those with compromised immune systems. Consumers should seek immediate medical care if they develop these symptoms.

MARK H. UFFER
County Administrative Officer

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